

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination FormSee instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic Black Baptist Churches in Okmulgee T/R

and/or common

2. Location

street & number (see continuation sheet) N/A not for publication

city, town N/A vicinity of congressional district

state Oklahoma code 40 county Okmulgee code 111

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use	
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> museum
<input type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial	<input type="checkbox"/> park
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational	<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	N/A in process	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government	<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Thematic	N/A being considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name (see continuation sheet)

street & number

city, town N/A vicinity of state

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Office of the County Clerk

street & number Okmulgee County Courthouse

city, town Okmulgee state OK 74447

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Oklahoma Landmarks Inventory has this property been determined eligible? ☐ yes ☒ nodate 1983 ☐ federal ☒ state ☐ county ☐ local

depository for survey records State Historic Preservation Office - Oklahoma Historical Society

city, town Oklahoma City state OK 73105

7. Description

Condition

☒ excellent

☐ good

☐ fair

☐ deteriorated

☐ ruins

☐ unexposed

Check one

☐ unaltered

☒ altered

Check one

☒ original site

☐ moved date _____

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Black Baptist Churches in Okmulgee thematic nomination consists of two religious buildings constructed in 1915 and 1921. Both are located in the Black residential community of Okmulgee which once boasted of over 3,500 black inhabitants and still retains one of the largest black districts outside of Oklahoma City, Tulsa, and Muskogee.

Both are Baptist in terms of denomination affiliation. The Baptist faith was historically the most active among Oklahoma blacks ranking first in black membership data in the religious censuses of 1906, 1916, 1926, and 1936. Each reflected the social and spiritual needs of the Okmulgee black community and served as a stabilizing social institution and source of community cohesiveness for black families during the era of racial separatism in Oklahoma.

Both properties are two story massive structures with red brick wall finishes. Both have a multiplicity of windows and considerable decorative elements. First Baptist Central has a gable roof and gable towers, whereas Eastside Baptist has a slightly pitched hip roof.

Although two additions have been made to the rear of First Baptist Central, they do not detract from the overall architectural integrity of the building. The Eastside Baptist retains its original character and fabric. Neither of the two properties has ever been vacant, holding continuous religious services since their construction. Both are detached buildings landscaped with a variety of trees and shrubs.

The two buildings included in the Black Baptist Churches in Okmulgee thematic nomination are:

(1) First Baptist Central Church (1915)

(2) Eastside Baptist Church (1921)

These two properties constitute the oldest surviving black churches in Okmulgee which remain intact.

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Continuation sheet Description Item number 7 Page 2

Black Churches in Okmulgee

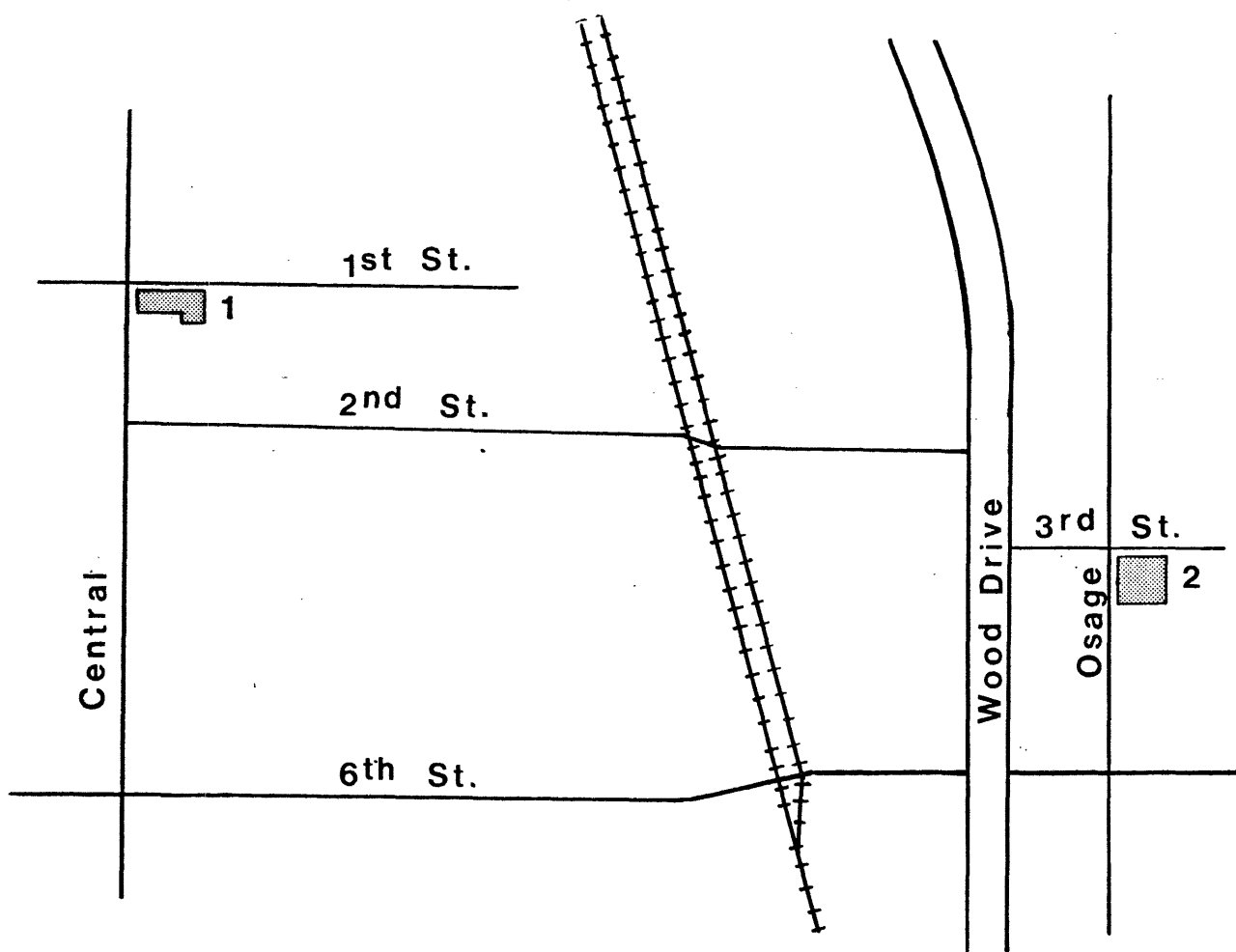
Scale of Feet

0 625

1 First Baptist (Central)

2 Eastside Baptist

N



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Black Baptist Churches in Okmulgee

1. ✓ First Baptist Central Church (~~No. 1 on Sketch Map and Photo Nos. 1-6~~)

Location: 521 North Central Avenue
Okmulgee, OK 74447

Owner of Property: First Baptist Central
521 North Central Avenue
Okmulgee, OK 74447

Description: The First Baptist Central Church is a 45' x 55' religious building with red brick wall finish laid in the common bond consisting of a stretcher/header course every seventh course. It has two stories and gable roof over the sanctuary. Two and one-half & three story towers located at southwest and northwest corners of the building, frame facade.

On the west side, fenestration includes a centrally located large round arched window opening with sixteen fixed pane windows framed with smooth masonry surrounds. The round arch has three layers of red brick laid in rowlock pattern and is keyed with smooth masonry element. The second story facade has four, 1/1, double-hung wood windows with stained glass of religious design. All of these windows have plain masonry lintels and lug sills. In the third story of the tower, there are two rectangular-shaped openings covered with metal panels. Both have plain masonry lintels and lug sills. In the gable end of the facade, there is a segmental arched opening with plain masonry lug sill. The arch is keyed and the opening has been covered with metal panel.

There are two entryways in the facade, one in each tower. Both have metal double doors with glass panels and single paned transoms. Above the transoms are plain masonry lintels.

The first floor of the north side has a band of three fixed pane windows and four single fixed pane windows, two on either side of the band. All have three lights. All but the window on east end of north side have plain masonry lintels and lug sills. The exception has a segmental arch consisting of three layers of brick laid in rowlock pattern. The second floor of the north side has four, 1/1, double-hung wood windows with stained glass of religious design. The third story of the tower on the northwest corner has two rectangular-shaped windows in north wall and one of the same design in west wall. All tower openings have plain masonry lintels and lug sills.

The first and second floors of the south side have similar fenestration to north side, however, there is no window in the upper level of the tower on the southwest corner.

The rear, or east side, has a metal ventilator grille in gable end of the second story.

Two additions have been completed to the rear--a 25' x 60' weatherboard finish section in the mid-1950s and a 12' x 25' concrete block section in the late 1960s. Both have pitched roofs with gables.

The large addition has two small fixed pane windows on north side, four small fixed pane windows in east wall, and a metal door with glass panel in the center of the north side. It has a small gabled porch supported by diagonal brackets.

The small addition has two, 1/1, double-hung wood windows on east and west sides, three 1/1, double-hung wood windows on south wall, and a wood panel door with light in upper half near southeast corner of the south wall.

The structure, however, retains its historic integrity.

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Black Baptist Churches in Okmulgee

Although the additions are constructed of different materials, they do not detract from the overall architectural integrity of the original building because of their location in the rear and similar colors to main building.

For more than 68 years, the First Baptist Central Church has remained intact.

Statement of Significance: The First Baptist Central Church is historically significant because: (1) it is the oldest black church building in Okmulgee having served the community for more than 68 years, (2) it is one of the oldest remaining properties of any type located within the black residential area of Okmulgee which once had the largest black community in Oklahoma outside of Tulsa, Oklahoma City, and Muskogee, and (3) it is among the oldest remaining black Baptist churches in eastern Oklahoma.

Built in 1915, the First Baptist Central evolved from the oldest black congregation in Okmulgee, the New Hope Baptist group, organized in 1892. Because of increased membership, the congregation outgrew their original structure and the present church was completed in 1915 as the first brick church for blacks in Okmulgee.

Church membership has fluctuated over the years at approximately 200-250 making it one of the largest all-black congregations in eastern Oklahoma. For more than 68 years, First Baptist Central has served the black community of Okmulgee by providing a place of worship and a social outlet for blacks during an era when racial separatism prevailed in Oklahoma.

Major Bibliographical References:

Franklin, Jimmie Lewis, Journey Toward Hope. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1982.

Eighty-Fourth Anniversary Observance. Marceline, MO.: Walsworth, 1976.

Personal Interview: P.W. Jackson (Minister), July, 1983.

Quadrangle Name: Okmulgee North, OK.

Scale: 7.5 minutes

UTM: 15/231040/3946510

Verbal Boundary Description: N $\frac{1}{2}$ of Lot 8 and Lots 9-10, Block 15,
Original Townsite of Okmulgee, OK.

✓ 2. Eastside Baptist Church (~~No. 2 on Sketch Map and Photo Nos. 7-10~~)

✓ Location: 219 North Osage Ave.,
Okmulgee, OK 74447

Owner of Property: Eastside Baptist Church
219 North Osage
Okmulgee, OK 74447

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Black Baptist Churches in Okmulgee

Description: The Eastside Baptist Church is a two-story, detached, rectangular-shaped religious building with gently pitched hip roof rising to a domed cupola in center of roof ridge. It is finished with red brick laid in running bond with a stretcher/header course every seventh row. There is a raised basement level.

The facade, or west side, is dominated by a two-story portico with pedimented roof. The four simplistic columns support a plain entablature and rest on red brick pedestals which feature a soldier course at the upper level. First floor fenestration consists of five sets of paired, 1/1, double-hung wood windows set in wooden frames. Second floor window arrangement includes five sets of paired, 1/1, double-hung wood windows. The entryway features a large metal door with glass light topped by a Gothic arched window of two lights. The raised basement level has a band of three casement windows north of portico and a band of three casement windows and band of two casement windows to the south of the portico. The entryway is reached by a series of ten steps flanked by small stepped columns of red brick with masonry capitals.

The north side is almost identical to the facade. The raised basement, however, has two bands of four casement windows to the east of the portico and one band of three casement windows to the west. A double wood panel door is located in center of raised basement level.

The south side has seven 1/1, double-hung wood windows with segmental arches. Near the southeast corner is a wood panel door with segmental arch. A wooden stairwell with railings leads from ground level to this door.

First floor fenestration of rear, or east side, has five sets of paired, 1/1, double-hung wood windows and a smaller, 1/1, double-hung wood window. The second floor has five sets of paired, 1/1, double-hung wood windows. The raised basement level has four sets of casement windows, three of which have two lights and the third has two lights.

Decorative elements include the two-story portico on north and west sides which feature four simplistic columns, pedimented gable, and pointed arch entryway. Additional elements include two belt courses of brick laid in soldier fashion which divide the three levels, decorative brickwork around windows and doors, brick sills laid in rowlock fashion, and segmental arches over windows and doors on south and east sides. The dome-shaped cupola has a finial.

Other than the brick on the east and south walls being painted, the property has retained its original character, fabric, and design for more than 62 years.

Statement of Significance: The Eastside Baptist Church is historically significant because: (1) it is the second oldest black Baptist church in Okmulgee having served the community for more than 62 years, and (2) it is among the oldest unaltered black churches in eastern Oklahoma.

Built in 1921, Eastside Baptist Church houses one of the oldest black congregations in Okmulgee. Founded in 1903 as the Zion Bethel Church, the first services were held in a small frame residence where the nominated property now stands. Because of membership growth, the frame structure became too small and the present structure was completed in 1921.

The church has been a community focal point during its 62 year history. From 1931 to 1949, baccalaureate and commencement exercises for the all-black Dunbar High School were held at Eastside.

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Black Baptist Churches in Okmulgee

Membership has fluctuated throughout the church's history from 150 to 225 members making it one of the largest black congregations in eastern Oklahoma. For more than 62 years, the Eastside Baptist Church has retained both its historic and architectural integrity.

Major Bibliographical References:

75th Church Anniversary of the Eastside Baptist Church, 1903-1978. Okmulgee, Oklahoma, 1978.

Personal Interviews: T. Oscar Chappelle, Jr., July, 1983.

Quadrangle Name: Okmulgee North, OK.

Scale: 7.5 minutes

UTM: 15/232080/3946290

Verbal Boundary Description: Lots 13-15, Block 38, Original Townsite of Okmulgee, OK.

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400–1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500–1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600–1699	<input type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700–1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800–1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900–	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other (specify) (Ethnic)

Specific dates 1915–? & 1921

Builder/Architect Unknown

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Black Baptist Churches in Okmulgee thematic nomination is historically significant: (1) they are the oldest and best remaining examples of black Baptist churches in Okmulgee, and (2) they are among the oldest black Protestant churches in eastern Oklahoma which retain their historic and architectural integrity.

Okmulgee was established in 1869 and soon became capital of the Creek Nation, Indian Territory. Following the allotment of Indian lands by the Dawes Commission in the 1890s, Okmulgee became a regional service center for eastern Indian Territory. In 1901 the Frisco Railroad extended its tracks from Sapulpa, Oklahoma to Texas via Okmulgee. Coal and oil fields were discovered nearby in the early 1900s and Okmulgee's population increased from an estimated 136 in 1890 to 4,176 in 1910. Of that 1910 total, 1,376 were black, or roughly 33 percent. By 1920 Okmulgee's black population numbered 3,359 or approximately 19 percent of the total of 17,430. Okmulgee's black community was the largest in the state outside of Oklahoma City, Tulsa, and Muskogee.

Okmulgee was an attractive urban center for black migrants because of numerous employment opportunities in the coal, petroleum, and railroad industries. During the early 1900s, a thriving black business district evolved. It included approximately twenty buildings. The black residential and commercial development was accompanied by the establishment of several social institutions including schools, fraternal orders, and churches.

Organized religion among blacks in Indian Territory dates to the 1830s when the Five Civilized Tribes brought their black slaves from the southeastern United States. The most active denomination among blacks in Indian Territory was the Baptist faith who were successful missionaries in the region. By the 1890s, black Baptists organized what became the Oklahoma Baptist State Convention which was a separate entity from the white Baptist state organization. In 1906, shortly after the two congregations in Okmulgee were founded, black church membership in the Twin Territories was approximately 26,000 with Baptists claiming two-thirds of that number.

The two black Baptist churches included in this nomination were constructed during the peak of Okmulgee's black community growth and commercial development. Because of their Baptist affiliation, they reflect the earlier missionary activity of the Baptist denomination among blacks in Indian Territory. These two churches represent the one social institution—religion—over which blacks had reasonable control. The church, therefore, exerted a powerful influence within the black community of Okmulgee. They were the centers of community cohesiveness and served as focal points that blacks could turn to for spiritual inspiration as well as to escape secular problems. They provided opportunities for self-expression, recognition, and leadership and proved to be a foundation for social and economic reform in a segregated society.

First Baptist Central was built in 1915 and Eastside Baptist in 1921. Both buildings were constructed as a result of increased membership in their respective congregations which could not be accommodated in their original church structures. Both were constructed on the sites of the original buildings. The First Baptist Central congregation evolved from the New Hope Black Baptist Church organized in 1892 and the Eastside Baptist grew out of the Zion Bethel Baptist Church founded in 1903. Both congregations are among the oldest black Baptist bodies in eastern Oklahoma and have retained large memberships of approximately 200 during their history.

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Both buildings have housed continuous religious services since their construction - - First Baptist Central for more than 68 years and Eastside Baptist for over 62 years. These two black Baptist Churches played a vital role in the religious and social history of Okmulgee's black community by providing a place of worship for early black residents as well as a social outlet for black families during a period in Oklahoma's history when the black church was a stabilizing and cohesive for blacks living in a segregated society.

9. Major Bibliographical References

(see continuation sheet)

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property Each property is less than one acre

Quadrangle name (see continuation sheet)

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UMT References

Eastside

A

1	5
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2	3	2	0	8	0
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3	9	4	6	2	9	0
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Zone

Easting

Northing

First Baptist Central

B

1	5
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2	3	1	0	4	0
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3	9	4	6	5	1	0
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Zone

Easting

Northing

C

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Verbal boundary description and justification

(see continuation sheet)

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state N/A code county code

state code county code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Bryan Brown Supervised by Dr. George Carney

organization Department of Geography

date February, 1984

street & number Oklahoma State University

telephone 405-624-6250

city or town Stillwater

state OK 74078

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

☐ national

☐ state

☒ local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

C. Metcalf

9/27/84

title

date

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I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

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National Park Service

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10/10/84

date entered

11-23-84

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Multiple Resource Area
Thematic Group

dnr-11

Name Black Baptist Churches in Okmulgee Thematic Resources
State Okmulgee County, OKLAHOMA

Cover

Nomination/Type of Review

Date/Signature

1. Eastside Baptist Church

Substantive Review

Keeper

Beth Grosvenor 11/23/84

Attest

2. First Baptist Central
Church

Substantive Review

Keeper

Beth Grosvenor 11/23/84

Attest

3.

Keeper

Attest

4.

Keeper

Attest

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Keeper

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Attest

10.

Keeper

Attest